

EDWARDS ANNOUNCES \$49 MILLION IN CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS FOR WACO VA HOSPITAL

U.S. Representative Chet Edwards today announced that five new construction projects totaling \$49 million have been approved for the Waco VA hospital by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The funding for the new construction was made possible by a \$397 million increase over the President's request for VA minor construction, which was authored by Edwards under the final 2008 Appropriations bill signed into law in December.

Edwards made the following excerpted remarks today:

"I have some very important news for the future of the Waco VA hospital and Central Texas veterans. I am pleased to announce that the Veterans Administration has approved five new construction projects totaling \$49 million for the Waco VA hospital.

"These projects are an important part of our plan to ensure the long-term future of the Waco VA as a national leader in serving America's veterans. This is great news for Central Texas veterans and for all of us who have fought so hard together to protect and expand the Waco VA hospital

"These five new construction projects are a major step forward for the Waco VA. This good news is in addition to the fact that the Waco VA hospital has already added over 100 new employees in the past 12 months and is moving forward on a nationally significant Post Traumatic Stress disorder research project with Ft. Hood.

"The new VA employees and construction projects are a tangible result of the historic VA funding increases passed by Congress last year. As the Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, it was a privilege for me to have authored the unprecedented funding increases for the VA, and our veterans deserve every dime of this funding.

"These projects are going to make a positive difference for veterans in Central Texas and throughout the nation, and I look forward to continuing to work closely with VA officials on the future of the Waco VA hospital."

Waco VA Construction Projects:

- \$9.8 Million to Establish a Mental Health Center of Excellence: Space is to be renovated for the new Mental Health Center of Excellence in Bldg 93. The space includes investigator offices and research labs.

- \$9.8 Million to Relocate and Expand Blind Rehab Unit: Blind rehab will be relocated to Bldg 9 where it can be appropriately renovated and doubled from 15 to 30 beds. Space will include a nursing unit and support, common training space, a vision rehabilitation section, a living skills section, computer access training, a manual skills section, a blind rehab outpatient section, an administration section and staff, and a family training program lodging.
- \$9.8 Million to Expand and Enhance Mental Health: Expand and enhance existing Inpatient Acute, Intermediate and Long-Term Psychiatry to either Building 7 or Building 8. Space will include one and two-bed rooms with private baths, congregate toilet facilities, bathing facilities, support facilities, offices, and education space.
- \$9.8 Million for Long-Term Care Renovations: Renovate long term care and pool and enhance rehabilitative facilities. Make environmental improvements for the long term care units now housed in Buildings 10 and 11. Space will include one and two-bed rooms with private baths, support facilities, and offices. It will also enhance the rehabilitation facilities and improve the existing rehab pool.
- \$9.8 Million for Infrastructure improvements: Infrastructure improvements. Provide repairs and replacement to critical infrastructure needed to support the campus and the new programs. Project includes construction of new laundry facility for Central and North Texas on the Waco VA campus.

In his first year as Chairman of the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, Congressman Edwards authored a historic increase of \$11.8 billion in veterans' health care and benefits, and hospital maintenance and construction, the largest increase in veterans funding in the 77-year history of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).